



Ministry
of Justice

Lord Timpson
Minister of State for Justice

Chair, Independent Monitoring Board
HMP/YOI Stanford Hill
Church Road
East church
ME12 4AA

MoJ ref: SUB128859

18 November 2025

Dear Chair,

**HMP/YOI STANFORD HILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025**

Thank you for providing your Board's annual report on HMP/YOI Stanford Hill. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for the continued hard work that you put into monitoring our prisons and reporting your observations in such a helpful and professional manner. This is particularly commendable given you continue to operate with just 60% of your recommended complement of Board members.

I was saddened to hear that two prisoners died in custody during the reporting year. I wish to express my condolences to their friends and family, and I would like to reassure the Board that recommendations made by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman are taken very seriously. I was encouraged to read in your report that the men at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill have access to enhanced mental health support and that the prison is pro-active in identifying those prisoners with problems that may cause them to feel the need to harm themselves.

I understand the Board's concerns about the increased instability of the prison population and its impact on the effectiveness of rehabilitative initiatives, particularly in category D prisons. You will be aware that improving opportunities for people to rehabilitate successfully, with the support of quality interventions and services, both in custody and in the community, is an issue close to my heart. I know this is central to reducing reoffending, preventing further victims, and enhancing peoples' lives.

The legislative changes this Government had to make to address issues of both chronic and acute overcrowding will have inevitably impacted both the mix and number of prisoners at respective prisons, unusually, in the case of HMP/YOI Stanford Hill, this has resulted in periods of under-occupation. Recent changes to the Security Categorisation Policy Framework now allow risk-assessed determinate sentence prisoners to access open conditions within five years of their earliest release date. This amendment is designed to maximise the use of open prisons and alleviate pressure on the closed estate, while maintaining the principle that prisoners should be held in the lowest category suitable for managing their risk. Alongside this, the Temporary Presumptive Recategorisation Scheme (TPRS) enables eligible prisoners to move to open conditions from 36 months before release, subject to strict risk assessment and immediate return provisions if risk increases. Both the policy change and the TPRS are under active evaluation and review to monitor their impact on open prison operations and ensure responsiveness to emerging operational needs.

I am aware that the early release schemes have impacted HMP/YOI Stanford Hill by significantly reducing external workspaces. The Governor and his team do, however, continue to work hard to expand daily opportunities for prisoners to engage in meaningful work and rebuild family connections. I am therefore reassured that both nationally and locally, any compromise to the prison's rehabilitative functions is likely to be temporary, and that the exceptional outcomes in education and attainment at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill can be re-established.

I was very pleased to learn more about the expansion plans for the prison which include a new library and the provision of on-site kitchen facilities, which you report will be transformative. This expansion will no doubt provide many new opportunities to build on the establishment of the well patronised prison shop.

It was most encouraging to read about the supportive environment, the culture of respect for the diversity that exists within the prison and that you observed good relations between the staff and the men in their care. I was also heartened to read of the consistently good health care service which has been further enhanced by the appointment of a Neurodiversity Support Manager who continues to improve inclusivity throughout the prison.

I note that your report has also raised some local concerns. The Governor will continue to keep you informed of any developments regarding these matters. HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) comments in response to other issues raised in your report are set out in the attached annex.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I very much appreciate the valuable role played by all members of the Independent Monitoring Boards operating throughout the prison estate and we remain grateful for your ongoing dedication on behalf of HMP/YOI Stanford Hill.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James', written in a cursive style.

Lord Timpson
Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending

HMP/YOI STANDFORD HILL: INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025

HMPPS comments on matters raised in the report

Prison shop

HMPPS is supporting prisoners into skilled work while in custody through vocational training, with an apprenticeship programme which can now be accessed in both the open and closed estates and a Future Skills Programme which provides short, sector specific training to prisoners nearing release, resulting in guaranteed interviews with employers. The shop at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill was a singleton pilot and as such we are continuously reviewing the model and any 'lessons learned;' not only to improve the offer, but also to assist the national Retail Project which is considering how best to roll out this format.

The team at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill has recently met with DHL to explore training and qualifications they offer their employees in terms of food safety in retail and warehousing with a view to entering into a partnership to upskill the prison's shop staff. There have also been conversations around the feasibility of funding a physical expansion of the shop premises in order to meet the demands of a larger prisoner population expected under the Cat D expansion programme. In addition, whilst currently there are not yet any formal retail qualifications being delivered, there are a number of prisoners already working for Morrisons supermarket whilst on Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) which was a recent success of the prison's Working Out Scheme.

Night time staffing levels

As part of the Workforce Delivery Project, recent work has been completed to review the underpinning staffing model for adult public sector prisons, including HMP/YOI Stanford Hill. This includes, amongst others, a review of the model for night time staffing levels. This is currently at the implementation planning stage and remains subject to affordability decisions. As such, we are unable to comment on any site-specific planned resource changes at this stage. The current night staffing model at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill has however not exposed any gaps in night-time supervision or response capacity.

Technology to validate release on temporary licence

We acknowledge the Board's continued interest in the potential for digital systems to support ROTL at HMP/YOI Stanford Hill and across the open estate. Whilst the efficiency and time-saving benefits of this technology are recognised, there are currently no national plans to implement a digital validation system. Barriers such as infrastructure limitations and operational capacity continue to impact feasibility. This represents quite a small, short-term cohort and given that ROTL compliance consistently sits at over 99% according to published statistics, it does not appear to warrant the intensive supervision that electronic monitoring inherently brings with it. HMPPS do however remain committed to identifying potential solutions to support more efficient and secure ROTL delivery.

The provision of PIN phones

HMPPS understand the importance of strengthening family ties for those preparing for release and is committed to exploring all viable options to improve telephony provision across the open estate. Although there are no immediate plans in place, we are actively considering future enhancements as part of the wider prisoner telephony contract. These considerations must balance competing requirements and costs across the prison estate for prisoner communications. Ahead of that, HMPPS will continue to identify and pursue tactical opportunities to expand the existing communal phone infrastructure wherever possible. HMP Leyhill are currently piloting an in-cell hands free SIM pin phone system and, if successful, it is hoped that funding may be made available to roll this out across the remainder of the open estate.